The Field Museum

Natural News

Weekly Staff Newsletter
September 15, 2000

Don't be afraid . . . come share your ideas!

NET—New and Exciting Technologies

Everyone in The Field Museum is invited to join an informal brown-bag lunch group to discuss New and Exciting Technologies (NET).

The goal is to create a **forum for innovation.** To that end, participants (regardless of experience in technology, please) can talk about ideas they find interesting or hopefully possible. As an informal group, we can "troll" the Museum for good ideas and then, as an institution, act entrepreneurially. Each monthly luncheon can focus on a theme, such as distance learning, digital imaging, or handheld computing.

Tuesday, September 19, at noon the first NET session will convene in the Zoology classroom. Anyone and everyone at the Field is very welcome to bring lunch there. The theme will be websites—our website, museum websites, exciting websites, different websites, dull websites, cool websites, web web web.

Please address questions to Alexander Sherman (ext. 7217 or asherman) or Peter Lang (ext. 7808 or plang).

FIELD NOTES

Week of September 18

Staff/Volunteer Events

Tae Bo Class
- Monday, 5 p.m., Ground Floor

Aerobics Class
- Tuesday, 5 p.m. , old Finance department swing space
- Thursday, 5 p.m. , Ground Floor

NET Session—Open to all!
- Tuesday, noon, Zoology classroom

Green Sheet Meeting
- Wednesday, 3 p.m., Special Events

Lifesource Blood Drive—Thursday
- Near Adler in the morning; near Park District after 1:30

Public/Campus Events

Chicago Museum Week
- All week long

World Music Festival: Chicago 2000
- Opening Concert on Thursday

Star Wars: The Magic of Myth
- Exhibit continues

Americanos
- Exhibit continues

The Natural News is edited by Rodger Patience in the Development Department. Send news items, artwork, and photos to patience@fmnh.org.

The deadline for each week's issue is Wednesday at noon.

DOCKET

5 September 2000

Diane White

- It was a "ho hum" week — only 37,000 visitors! only 85% more than last year!
- Already, at almost 1.8 million, 2000 is one of the best attendance years in history, behind the 1933 World's Fair and behind — but not for long — Tutankhamun in 1977
- Underground Adventure is still attracting one-third of visitors, which is outstanding longevity for a long-term exhibition
- Since the Museum hours are now 9-5, the switchboard is now 8:30-5

Gary Feinman

- Two indigenous Shipibo people from the Amazon visited to study the anthropology collections
- Gillian Darlow returned from "Defying Nature's End," a conference hosted by Conservation International

Cathleen Costello

- Alexander Joseph Hilton was born Friday; both mother and son are doing well
- Part of the Americas Halls reopened — Hall 3, reached through the Northwest Coast hall
- The Olmec head unveiling will be 21 October, with many VIPs in attendance
- Sue Hendrickson will attend the Dinosaurs and More Festival in November
- Navy Pier has a dinosaur festival, too
- MSI extending Titanic one month
- Shedd will offer half-price tickets on Mondays and Tuesdays in September — part of the new free day program

Fay Levin

- Shedd offering three Amazon conservation lectures, $50 per person, including reception

Jim Croft

- FY2001 budget materials coming out, to be returned by 9 October
- Finance Committee of the Board is considering combining the debt service fund and the endowment
- Embarking on a capital structure study, including benchmarking the debt-equity ratio
- Embarking on a study of working capital (short-term assets and liabilities)
- Facilities Advisory Committee is meeting, with a new subcommittee for grounds, to identify issues and propose solutions related to the increased use of the building since Sue's opening

John McCarter

- September 18 — Board of Trustees meeting
- By conservative estimates, The Field Museum brings $80-100 million annually in tourist spending to Chicago

READ DOCKET NOTES ONLINE AT — http://intranet1/departments/docket

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Meterotical Society returns to Chicago for annual meeting

The 63rd Annual Meeting of the Meteoritical Society was held in Chicago from August 28 to September 1, 2000, and was organized by Meenakshi Wadhwa (Geology) and Andrew M. Davis (Department of Geophysical Sciences, University of Chicago). The meeting was additionally sponsored by two other local institutions, the Adler Planetarium and Argonne National Laboratory, as well as by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the National Science Foundation.

The Meteoritical Society (then called the Society for Research on Meteorites) was founded at The Field Museum in August 1933, and Oliver C. Farrington (then Curator of Geology) was named Honorary President. It is, therefore, highly fitting that the Meteoritical Society returned to the place of its birth in this millennial year. The meeting was attended by more than 400 participants from 26 countries. In addition to Meenakshi, The Field Museum was represented at the meeting by Clarita Nunez, Geology collections manager and Phil Janney, manager of the Isotope Geochemistry Laboratory. Several Field Museum volunteers helped with registration and projection at the meeting (many thanks are due to Ambika, Chris, Dennis, Jay and Mary Sue!).

The welcome reception was held in Stanley Field Hall, where meeting participants had the opportunity to view the exhibits (and admire Sue!). The Field Museum also hosted the awards ceremony (where the Meteoritical Society presented its three annual awards), which was held in the imposing James Simpson Theatre. All oral sessions of the meeting were held at the Hotel Inter-Continental in downtown Chicago.

Highlighting this year's meeting were special sessions on current planetary missions and future sample returns, and on interstellar dust grains. The special session on current missions and future sample returns included talks regarding two missions that have recently made significant discoveries: the Near Earth Asteroid Rendezvous (NEAR)-Shoemaker mission, which is providing scientists with their closest look ever of an asteroid, and Mars Global Surveyor, which is sending images and data of unprecedented resolution and detail of the surface of Mars. The special session on interstellar dust grains focused on grains that were thrown out of stars more than 4.5 billion years ago, before the sun's birth, then got mixed into molecular clouds that eventually collapsed to form the solar system; studies of these grains, which were first successfully separated from meteorites in laboratories at the University of Chicago in the 1980s, are providing planetary scientists with tremendous insights into the processes involved in star formation and the synthesis of elements within stars. Other topics of discussion at the meeting included meteorites from the moon and Mars, impact craters on Earth and four-and-a-half-billion-year-old water samples preserved within minerals in some asteroidal meteorites.

That's Dr. Croft to you!

Darin Croft defended his thesis in March and received his Ph.D. in Organismal Biology and Anatomy from the University of Chicago in June. John Flynn (Geology) was Darin's advisor, while Geology research associates Jim Hopson (co-advisor), Andy Wyss and Eric Lombard also served on the Ph.D. committee.

Darin's thesis was entitled "Archaeohyracidae (Mammalia: Notoungulata) from the Tinguiririca Fauna, central Chile, and the evolution and paleoecology of South American mammalian herbivores".

In this work, Darin described several new species of notoungulates (an extremely diverse, but entirely extinct group of hoofed mammals endemic to South America) and investigated their phylogenetic relationships with previously-described members of the group. He also looked at the evolution of herbivore communities over the past 65 million years in South American and demonstrated that techniques such as "cenograms" that are based on present-day communities may not be applicable to reconstructing certain types of paleocommunities.

Darin received an extremely competitive, three-year National Science Foundation (NSF) Predoctoral Fellowship, and his dissertation won the Departmental Award for Outstanding Performance in Organismal Biology and Anatomy for best Ph.D. thesis in his department.

His thesis and on-going research is partially supported by NSF and National Geographic grants (to Flynn and colleagues), and a series of grants to Darin from Sigma-Xi, American Society of Mammalogists, The Paleobiological Fund, and others. Darin is currently working in a new "bridge" position at The Field Museum, working as a program developer for the Educational Media Division and as a postdoctoral researcher in Geology.

WE GET LETTERS . . .

Dear Mr. McCarter,

Reviewing the current copy of *In The Field*, I noted the news of the Museum's membership reaching 40,000. Congratulations!

As one of those members, I would like to thank you and your fine staff for the great work that you have been doing. I am a lifelong Chicago-area native, and the Museum today looks better than ever. A special "thank you" should go to everyone who worked to make this summer's Members' Night such a wonderful evening. My husband, daughters (ages 9 and 5) and I had a wonderful time. Pressed flowers from the behind-the-scenes activities that evening are being presented as a kindergarten show-and-tell item today.

Best wishes for continued success.

Sincerely,
Karen Cunningham

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Alert to All Cat Lovers . . .

Our hearts have been stolen by an adorable 8 week old stray kitten who chose the flowers next to our front step as a good place to hide and cry for an hour. He's black on top, white underneath and has a black-, grey-, and white-striped face, and striped patches on the legs—the cutest thing you've ever seen. We would love to keep him, but our schedules and plans for the next few years don't make it possible. We're looking for a home for him where he can get lots of attention and play-time. Write or call Gretchen (gbaker, x7441) or Margaret (mmetz, x7449).

Submitted by Margaret Metz and Gretchen Baker

FACILITY PLANNING & OPERATIONS

Look out for this tough guy!

Mice have been spotted in several areas of the Museum, most likely due to increased construction. If you spot one, call the Housekeeping Department at ext. 7923. Please check your desks and shelves to be certain that you do not have any edibles that would attract mice. Any food should be kept in a sealed container and ideally not left overnight.

Freight elevator modernization begins soon

The freight elevator will be undergoing modernization starting on Monday, September 25. The freight elevator will be totally unavailable for the next two weeks.

The elevator will be available again on October 9 but only on a limited basis. The elevator will be available between the hours of 5 and 7 a.m. each morning and 7 until 11 p.m. each night. Any additional time will have to be scheduled through FP&O.

Construction will be finished by November 22, 2000.

EDUCATION

Bottles, bottles everywhere . . . and not a drop to drink!

Are you tired of throwing away perfectly good plastic water bottles? Well, we have the perfect solution. Bring 'em to the Harris Loan Center. We are in need of empty Corner Bakery water bottles and 2-liter soda bottles for our upcoming Underground Critter Fest 2000.

Please bring any and all of these bottles to the Harris Loan Center as soon as possible. Thanks for your help! We (and Mother Nature) appreciate it!

Submitted by Kristin R. Atman

World Music Festival: Chicago 2000

A world class event at a world class institute!

The Field Museum is hosting the opening concert
of the highly acclaimed World Music Festival: Chicago 2000
and you are all invited!

Opening Night Concert

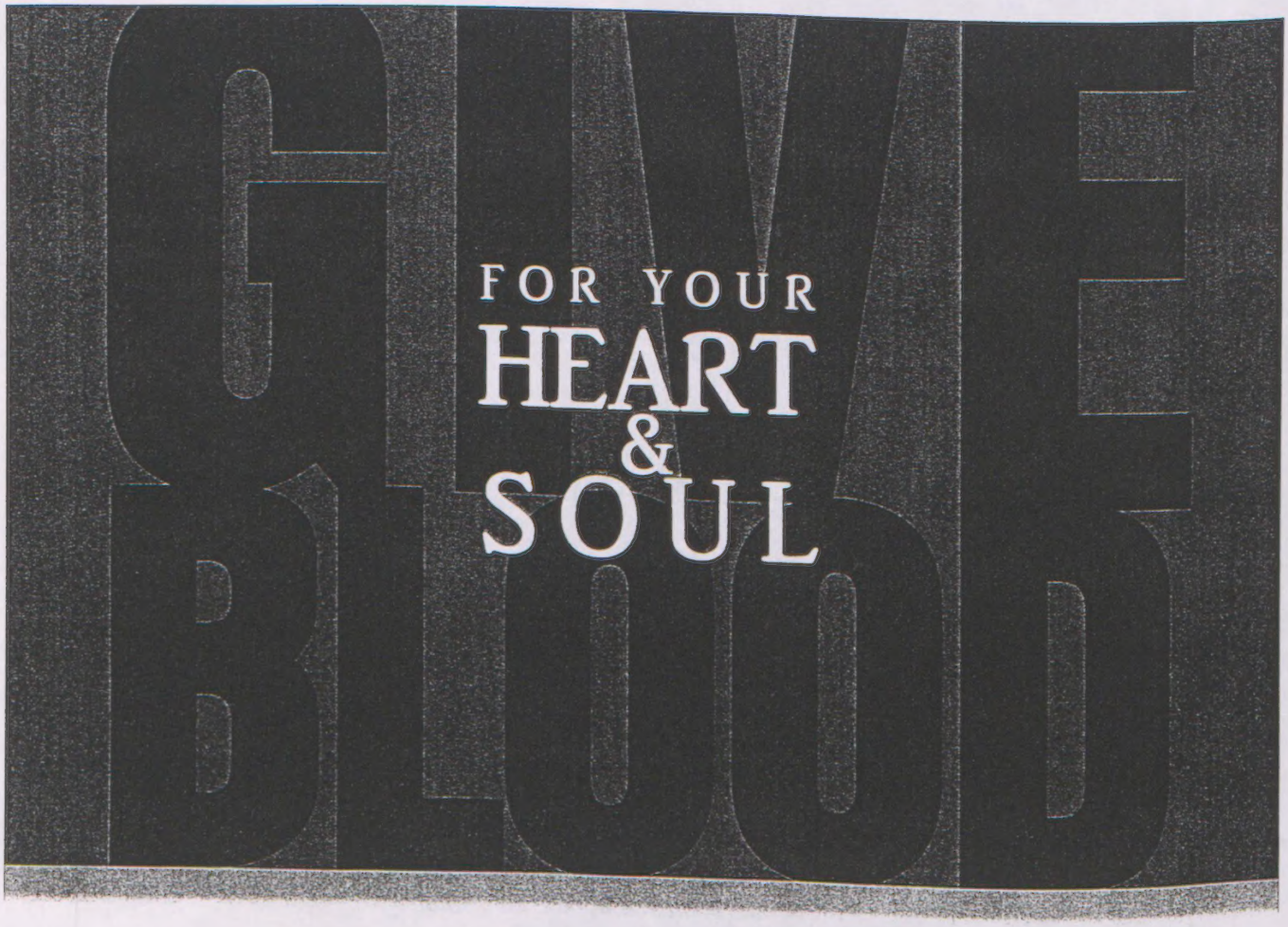
Thursday, September 21, 2000

This year's opening night concert includes music that will make you dance and sway into the evening sunset with a mixture of traditional, spiritual, and rhythmic sounds from Africa, the Latin-Caribbean, Canada and the United States.
The spectacular opening night lineup includes

Jazz musician Steve Coleman and the Mystic Rhythm Society
with special guests from Africa, Haiti, Cuba and the USA
Kanenhi:IO (First Nations singers, Canada),
Oliver Mtukudzi and Black Spirits (Zimbabwe/Africa) and
Plena Libre (Puerto Rico).

Enjoy Chicago's lakefront and magnificent skyline while being serenaded by these world-class musicians on opening night.

The free opening for the festival will take place just north of The Field Museum (which will also be open) on the Museum Campus from 5:30 to 9 p.m.



THE FIELD MUSEUM
BLOOD DRIVE
Thursday, September 21, 2000
1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
ON THE LIFESOURCE MOBILE VAN

For an appointment or more information, please contact Heather Friend @ (312) 665-7275.

Eligible Donors:

- Are 17-80 years of age
- Weigh at least 110 lbs.
- Are in good health
- Have not donated in 56 days

Donate Blood and receive a mini-physical which includes checking

* Blood pressure
* Temperature
* Pulse
* Iron Check

PLEASE EAT A GOOD MEAL & DRINK EXTRA WATER BEFORE DONATING.

Walk-ins Welcome!

DONATE BLOOD.

LIFESOURCE Blood Services
CHICAGOLAND'S BLOOD CENTER